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ABSTRACT

This paper proposed some limitations on "quantitative-only" research focusing on Puerto Rican poverty in the United States. An overreliance on quantitative data may not allow for a full understanding and awareness of the nature and maintenance of poverty in Puerto Rican communities in the United States. An understanding of Puerto Rican poverty in urban America today requires a broad range of tools and methodological approaches. There are at least three potential research tools that should not be overlooked in the study of Puerto Rican poverty. These tools include social history and the role of power and politics, comparative frameworks, and using "community" as the unit of analysis rather than solely the individual or the family as the unit of analysis. Using these kinds of tools can provide a better understanding of the nature of Puerto Rican poverty and the responses that might be appropriate for this continuing issue. In the case of Puerto Ricans, cultural patterns and behaviors are generally approached as pathological by many researchers. There is a wide gulf between the policy discussions of researchers focusing on poverty in the United States and the concerns and insights offered by poor people regarding their own status. The expansion of involvement of the people themselves will help in the development of new and creative models for overcoming the limitations of current research paradigms. (SLD)

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Missing Links in the Study of Puerto Rican Poverty in the United States

by

James Jennings

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Occasional Paper # 30

Missing Links in the Study of Puerto Rican Poverty in the United States

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James Jennings

1995

This paper is based on a presentation to the National Puerto Rican Coalition in Washington, DC, on June 22, 1992. James Jennings is Professor of Political Science and Director of the William Monroe Trotter Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Foreword

This Occasional Paper, based on a presentation to the National Puerto Rican Coalition in Washington, DC, in 1992, proposes some limitations in "quantitative-only" research focusing on Puerto Rican poverty in the United States. An overreliance on quantitative-based analysis, as well as overlooking historical and comparative data, may not allow for a full understanding and awareness of the nature and maintenance of poverty in Puerto Rican communities in the United States. While the presentation acknowledges the importance of sophisticated quantitative research, it implies that joined together with historical and comparative analysis, investigations of Puerto Rican poverty would be vastly improved. An understanding of Puerto Rican poverty in urban America today requires a broad range of tools and methodological approaches. There are at least three potential research tools that should not be overlooked in the study and analysis of poverty among Puerto Ricans. These tools include social history and the role of power and politics, comparative frameworks, and utilizing "community" as the unit of analysis, rather than solely the "individual" or "family" as the unit. The utilization of these kinds of tools can provide a better understanding of the nature of Puerto Rican poverty and what might be appropriate responses to this continuing issue and problem.

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Introduction

The groundwork for studies and analysis of poverty in the Puerto Rican community in the United States in the last two decades was provided by the pioneering work of scholars like Oscar Lewis, Patricia Sexton, and others in the 1950s and 1960s. While a few scholars such as Frank Bonilla, Clara Rodriguez, Lloyd Rogler, Marta Tienda, Andres Torres, and others continued to examine the causes of Puerto Rican poverty and related issues in the United States, up until recently the topic was generally ignored by many researchers. As a matter of fact, a report prepared for the Ford Foundation in 1984 by Frank Bonilla, Harry Pachon, and Marta Tienda entitled, *Public Policy Research and the Hispanic Community*, pointed out that there existed "a critical shortage of information about Hispanic-origin groups. . . There still remain substantial gaps limiting the extent to which policy research about specific demographic topics can be conducted."[1]

Recently more attention has been paid to the problem of poverty in this community due to improvements in data collection methods developed since the 1984 report, but also the realization that this group is among the most consistently poor in the country. In fact, some have suggested that while research studies and discourses have identified the problem of poverty in the black community as entrenched, growing, and intensifying, this situation may be far worse for Puerto Rican communities in the United States. While not completely new, this attention to analyzing and understanding Puerto Rican poverty in this country should be encouraged; however, the research tools utilized to studying this issue should not be confined solely to quantitative tools and approaches, an emerging bias in the germane literature.

Despite increased systematization and sophistication in the collection of data, researchers should be wary of overlooking potential limitations in utilizing purely quantitative analysis of Puerto

Rican poverty. While quantitative analysis based on census data or surveys for studying Puerto Rican poverty are important tool and key, policy discussions and suggestions for resolving the problem of poverty in this community are incomplete if they rely exclusively on quantitative measurements. In fact, quantitative analysis may have quite limited value if utilized without the benefit of other research tools in providing insights for understanding the causes, nature, and development of Puerto Rican poverty.

Several kinds of research limitations and biases are reflected in some of the emerging studies on Puerto Rican poverty in the United States that rely only on quantitative data and analysis. These limitations include the following:

- surveys and "official" data, such as the census and government agency data, are usually time-bound;
- analysis is driven (primarily) by "hard" data, presuming that complex social conditions and situations can easily be captured in quantifiable paradigms;
- assumption that language and "counting" are neutral within research and evaluative designs;
- research analysis can be ahistorical, even ignoring important and revealing patterns and trends over long periods of time;
- poverty-related studies may approach a group's culture with presumptions of pathology;
- the unit of analysis of much poverty-related research is the individual or the family, rather than the "community";
- an absence of input from the targets of research studies in determining the conceptualization, design, analysis, and interpretation of research related to poverty;
- utilization of terms that are not defined analytically, such as "underclass" or "inner city," are used arbitrarily, without precise definition;
- research is conducted without the benefit of comparative analysis; and,

- the role of politics and power is minimized or ignored in the analysis of poverty-related issues;

In the following section these criticisms are explained more fully in the context of studying Puerto Rican poverty in the U.S.

Data and Numbers are Time-Bound

Perhaps an obvious limitation of some research studies on poverty is that quantitative data collected at one point in time, tend to be time-bound. This is unavoidable, of course. Some of the literature on poverty raise discussions based on the "latest" census or survey data available, but even the "latest" can be out-dated in terms of recent and even daily developments of people and communities on a broad scale. Official data, such as the census, can be time-bound while living conditions associated with poor communities continually change daily and, at times, rapidly; this kind of limitation is especially evident among the Puerto Rican poor in urban communities due to an additional factor of continual, and back-and-forth, migration between cities in the United States and Puerto Rico.

Despite this limitation, census and survey data carry much weight in the determination, or justification of public policies directed at resolving poverty, or problems related to poverty. But as qualified by the late Sar Levitan in his article, *Measurement of Employment, Unemployment and Low Income*, "[d]ata needs are not immutable. As reality, application and theory change, measures must be adjusted or added in order for the labor force statistics to remain useful and accurate..."[2] Partially for this reason, a major survey of Latino social and civic attitudes, T*he Latino National Political Survey*, conducted a few years ago, was critiqued by a group of researchers. As these researchers

pointed out, "[s]urvey research can rarely provide adequate consideration of the historical dynamics that have produced the snapshot it takes; yet such dynamics are essential to the interpretation of survey results. Likewise, the survey snapshot has little ability to predict how historical dynamics will influence the future."[3]

Analysis of Social Conditions Is Based Exclusively on "Hard" Data

Analysis of poverty should, for the most part, be "data-driven." But an exclusive reliance on quantification may not allow the discovery of the many facets of social reality among the poor in urban settings. Too many social realities, relationships, and personal and community histories simply cannot be captured by hard data. Yet, these kinds of realities may be critical in the formulation of effective and long-lasting antipoverty strategies. Attempts to overly quantify human interaction, as well as the impact of broad social and economic forces, may lead to assumptions that are geared more towards keeping the experiment statistically neat and simple, rather than building a theoretical understanding of the history, nature, or causes of poverty, and how communities can overcome the problems associated with poverty.

Quantification, furthermore, is not an absolute guarantee that the researcher has shed all biases. As we are reminded by Robert Bogdan and Margaret Krander, something as simple, and "neutral," as mere counting can also reflect bias: "Counting is an attitude to take toward people, objects, and events. Phenomena only appear as rates and measures after an attitude is developed toward them which acknowledges them as existing, important to count, and susceptible to counting procedures."[4]

Poverty As a Socio-Historical Process

Too many studies analyzing poverty among racial and ethnic groups are ahistorical. This serves to obfuscate certain kinds of queries that should be part of attempts to understand the nature of (continuing) poverty among some groups. Almost three decades ago sociologist Stephan Thernstrom issued a warning regarding the use of hard data in the absence of social and historical analysis. He stated in his essay, *Further Reflections on the Yankee City Series: The Pitfalls of Ahistorical Social Science*, that "the student of modern society is not free to take his history or leave it alone. Interpretation of the present requires assumptions about the past. The actual choice is between explicit history, based on a careful examination of the sources, and implicit history, rooted in ideological preconceptions and uncritical acceptance of local mythology."[5]

A major issue that is overlooked by studies relying exclusively on hard data and not appreciative of social history, for example, are the persisting gaps between the living conditions of Puerto Ricans and blacks, and whites in the United States, even when controlling for schooling. Yet, continuing racial and ethnic gaps, especially over a long period of time, should be as important for investigation as a group's current social and economic status. Focusing on racial and ethnic gaps, by the way, may provide insight about the limitations of strategies and policies directed at alleviating living conditions associated with poverty status.

Note the on-going debates and discussions regarding the relationship of family structure and poverty in the black community. One can easily get the impression that poverty in the black community emerged only after certain kinds of structural family changes; that is, only after increases in the proportion of female-headed households. But, a poverty gap in the proportion of poverty among blacks and whites has remained unchanged for more than 50 years. In other words, while

blacks were generally three times more likely to be in poverty than whites in the 1940s, into the 1990s, blacks were still generally three times more likely to be in poverty than whites—regardless of changes in black family structure, national administrations, or the national economy.[6] This is also the case for Puerto Ricans in the United States who have consistently been among the poorest groups in this country for more than a 50 year period, since the second world war.

Lack of sociohistorical analysis has led some researchers focusing on Puerto Rican poverty to repeat the mistake of Daniel P. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer in their 1963 study that viewed the Puerto Rican community in New York City as post-World War II in its origins.[7] But the history of this community shows that a culturally and socially identifiable—and growing—Puerto Rican community existed in New York City from the late nineteenth century. Works such as *Memorias de Bernado Vega*, Jesus Colon's *A Puerto Rican in New York*, or the writings of Arturo Schomburg all point to a culturally vibrant, albeit relatively small, Puerto Rican community decades before the second world war.[8] And this community, while more involved with politics on the Island of Puerto Rico before WWII, continued to interact with the city's political establishment. Still, today some studies analyze Puerto Rican poverty within a conceptual framework that posits a recently arrived post-World War II group.

I contend that one should understand the role of the history of groups like Puerto Ricans—and blacks—in the United States, as a critical element in a full and comprehensive discussion of race and poverty in this nation. Is poverty a "new" problem for the Puerto Rican community? How is poverty today similar or different in relation to white and black poverty 40 or 50 years ago? Has this relationship changed over periods of time, how? Unfortunately, studies on Puerto Rican poverty in the United States, have generally overlooked this area of inquiry. Yet, it

might be useful to understand how the nature of Puerto Rican poverty has changed, is changing, and whether it has changed at all in relation to other groups and the broader society in different periods of U.S. economic history. This information may shed light on what actually works and does not, in responding to poverty conditions.

There has been some literature over the years suggesting that the "strengths" and assets of the black community should be utilized as building blocks for effective social welfare policy. I am making reference here to writers who have identified the role of the black church, the resiliency of the Black family, as well as to racial consciousness as a tool for social and economic development, and certainly black protest as strengths. Can we raise similar discussions about the Puerto Rican community in the United States? Are there not important cultural and social resources in the Puerto Rican community that could be tapped by institutions and government in attempting to reduce poverty in this community? Again, this is an issue that is easily overlooked when researchers become overly bogged down with the "official" numbers describing segments of a group's social realities.

Some researchers studying Puerto Rican poverty today have either not been exposed to the history of this group, both in the United States and Puerto Rico, or have decided that it is not relevant in the study of urban poverty in the current period. Both of these positions are problematic in terms of providing an understanding of the causes and resolutions of poverty among Puerto Ricans. As a matter of fact, conducting studies of poverty in black or Latino communities without attempting to understand the history of these groups is to assume implicitly that such histories and the cultural traditions of these groups are insignificant and have nothing to offer to the understanding of the researcher.

Culture and Language as Assets Rather Than Pathology

In the case of Puerto Ricans, cultural patterns and behavior, as well as language differences, are generally approached as pathological by many researchers; that is to say, something must be wrong with these people because they do not seem to think or act like white middle-class Americans, nor are they accepted by white middle-class Americans. Many authors of poverty-related studies approach a group's culture as, a priori, the major determining factor explaining the poverty status of that group. This approach reflects a simplistic posture to studying the relationship between culture and a group's poverty status; the researcher presumes that culture can be captured in a neat, well-articulated formula. But, as social anthropologist Lloyd H. Rogler reminds us, "[c]ulture penetrates human life in multitudinous ways, some of which we are beginning to understand but most of which still remain to be discovered."[9]

Similarly, this criticism has been made by some observers regarding research on the black family in the United States. Robert B. Hill has noted that the media and many social scientists arbitrarily employ a framework for studying the black family that denotes fundamental cultural deficiencies, including an uncritical acceptance of "the assumptions of the 'deficit model' which attributes most of the problems of black families to internal deficiencies of pathologies."[10] Despite complexities, and subtleties, involved with all cultures, some poverty research-related surveys and questionnaires are structured and designed in such a way as to impose a "category fallacy"; that is, "categories developed in one culture or another culture without determining the cultural appropriateness of the category."[11]

"Community" as the Unit of Analysis

Another problem with poverty research focusing on Puerto Ricans, and blacks, is that the investigations on race and poverty have utilized the individual or family as the unit of analysis. But some Puerto Rican scholars and civic activists, as have many black intellectuals for quite a period of time, have instead proposed that "community" be utilized as the unit of analysis, incorporating a presumption of assets and resources, rather than pathology. But it seems to me that some researchers assume that "community" is nonexistent among the poor who are black or Puerto Rican. Moreover, when poverty researchers do discuss communities in urban areas dominated by people of color, pejorative terms like "slum," "ghetto," or "underclass" are frequently utilized in their work.

The particular unit of analysis can determine the questions that are raised as the important ones. Using only the individual or family as the reference point for analysis means that the questions will typically focus on what has happened to the black individual or the black family rather than the effect of policies on the community and its institutional, economic, and cultural fabric. An example of this, as pointed out by housing researcher Sheila Ards, is the debate around housing vouchers.[12] This debate has been confined in some forums and journals to examining whether black individuals or families can be best served by receiving vouchers to seek out housing. But what is the effect of vouchers on the use of land in the black community? This question has been ignored because the unit of analysis in much of the "mainstream" literature is either the individual or the family, rather than the community.

Another example of how the particular unit of analysis can mold or influence the kinds of conclusions of even "objective" studies, is commentary on the nature and degree of racial and economic progress in the United States. One might look at this question in terms of the number of

black "middle-class" individuals, or families. Based on some indication of "middle-classness," (usually arbitrarily defined), have the number of blacks in this status increased or declined over a period of time? The answer to this query would lead to an examination of policies that might explain the increase or decrease in numbers, because such would imply progress, or the lack of progress for this group.

This same narrow approach has been utilized by scholars examining Latino economic progress in the U.S. But another way to examine racial and economic progress is to ask, what has happened to Puerto Rican "communities"? What has happened to the social, economic, or educational institutions operating in these communities? How have self-help institutions like the "Sons of Puerto Rico" clubs in places like New York City, the latter described by Patricia Cayo Sexton in the 1960s, or community institutions in the 1970s and 1980s, fared under various kinds of public policies and national administrations? Changing the unit of analysis may lead to different sets of questions, and a different kind of critique and evaluation of current public policies focusing on poverty.

Media Images As Research Tool

Many of the perceptions regarding Puerto Ricans and blacks who are impoverished are based on what is presented in the media. Anthony Barker and B. Guy Peters argue that "[a] great deal of the scholarly literature on public policy is written from the perspective of the decision-maker attempting to make an optimal choice about a policy that will best serve the 'public interest'... Unfortunately, however, the real world of policy-making is not so neat as that..."[13] Due to relatively little civic influence in many cities, however, Puerto Ricans do not have the political or economic

capacity to counter such images, or present favorably their thinking or collective experiences in the pages of the city's major newspapers.

Perhaps it is due to little understanding, knowledge, or appreciation of culture and history of groups like Puerto Ricans in the United States, as pointed out earlier, that permit researchers to rely on the media to influence their own social perceptions of these communities. Thus, as one critic decries, "[j]ournalists have become the publicly recognized ethnographers. . . anyone who talks to or lives among the poor is considered an authority and can describe them and speak on their behalf."[14] Using this kind of "expertise," the media writes *about* poor people, seldom on *behalf* of, or *by*, poor people. As pointed out by one journalist, Dorothy Clark, in her essay, *Race, Poverty, and the Role of Media,* there may be valid and technical reasons for this, of course.[15] But, the important note here is that the "methodology" of collecting news, and who collects it and decides what to report and how to report it, not only molds the perceptions the general public has about race, ethnicity, and poverty, but contributes to the conceptualizations utilized by researchers regarding the nature of Puerto Rican poverty.[16] Too often, the media-driven conceptualizations are borrowed without question or scrutiny by "objective" researchers to construct their own methodologies for investigating urban poverty, race, and ethnicity.

Pejorative Terms and Arbitrary Definitions as Research Tools

The research community has taken license to define arbitrarily basic poverty-related terms without the benefit of analytical scrutiny. Researchers assume that language, and descriptive terms and phrases, are neutral, if they just treat them as neutral. But this is not the case. This criticism is evident in questionnaires and interview instruments that seek information about poverty experiences

but are developed by researchers without an understanding or familiarity with everyday life and linguistic nuances associated with different social milieu in various parts of poor communities. Even commonly-used name describers of specific groups should not be approached or treated as research-neutral. As was pointed out by David E. Hayes-Bautista some time ago, the actual name utilized to identify a racial or ethnic group can have important research implications. Definitional differences, as in "Mexican American" vs. "Spanish heritage" may cover major social differences making it difficult to generate comparisons between groups.[17]

Related to this is a serious problem of researchers using terms that have not been defined analytically, or explained in research operational terms. The more famous examples of such terms related to poverty research include "middle class," "slum," "ghetto," "broken family," and what social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s used to frequently refer to as the "culturally deprived." These are imprecise terms open to a range of definitions and connotations totally depending on the user. The definition of "middle class," for instance, depends on who is using it and, in many cases, for what purpose. Both scholars and the media have used this term loosely, sometimes based on varying measures of income ranges, social attitudes, or occupation. Not specifying the analytical content of such terms leads to major ideological and polemical abuse in political and policy discussions focusing on poverty.

Political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr., argues that one term that has been used extensively without the benefit of consistent or analytical rigor is "the underclass."[18] As stated earlier, in too many instances researchers seem to have allowed journalists, in particular, to guide the utilization of this highly connotative term without insisting on precise definition. It should be noted that there have been attempts to explain what is meant by the underclass, but invariably the models still include

many assumptions about poverty and poor communities. For example, one of the latest attempts is to examine an area with high levels of poverty and unemployment, and assume that the residents of this particular area include the "underclass." This form of "social areas methodology," however, glosses over many important differences in status, attitudes, and life histories within the physical boundaries of such areas. One needs only to have a few first-hand experiences in such a "high poverty" area to notice how aggregated census and survey data can hide and arbitrarily oversimplify continually changing social situations.

Poverty Research as History and Humanism

Poverty research in the U.S. tends to be "discipline-based" to an extreme. Developing overarching policy paradigms that allow the perspectives and training of economists, historians, and humanists, to integrate their findings and think broadly and dialectically is difficult. The conceptualization of public policy responses to social welfare issues is highly specialized within disciplines and generally lacks comparative frameworks. As suggested by Walter Korpi in his essay, *Approaches to the Study of Poverty in the U.S.*, poverty research in this country is usually conducted without the benefit of comparative analysis across nations.[19]

This is a major limitation in understanding the nature of Puerto Rican poverty in urban America. Though there are many queries about urban poverty that should be raised within a comparative framework, given the social history and current situation of Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rico, the simple one posed decades ago by sociologist Dardo Cuneo in his introduction to the work by Jesus de Galindez, *Puerto Rico en Nueva York: Sociologia de Una Immigración*, is still relevant today: "Donde se marcan las fronteras diferenciales entre la America del Norte y la latina; en donde

dejan de marcarse?"[20] In this case, the poverty experience of Puerto Ricans in the United States could perhaps be better understood if we also noted the nature of poverty in Puerto Rico. The work and insights of scholars who have studied poverty in Puerto Rico should not be ignored or summarily excluded from analysis focusing on the poverty experiences of Puerto Ricans in American cities. Thus, I would point to the classic works of Eugenio Fernandez Mendez, *Portrait of a Society*, as well as the exceptional reader by Rafael L. Ramirez, Carlos Buitrago Ortiz, and Barry B. Levine, *Problemas de Desigualdad en Puerto Rico,* as studies that are still relevant for raising questions about Puerto Rican poverty in the United States today.[21]

The essay by Rafael L. Ramirez, *Marginalidad, Dependencia y Participación Politica en el Arrabal*,[22] might suggest different models and approaches for studying behavior related to poverty in Puerto Rican communities in the United States other than the pathological and ahistorical approaches popular among many economists in the current period. Another essay in this same reader by Celia F. Cintron and Barry B. Levine, *Quienes Son Los Probes en Puerto Rico*?[23] has major implications in reminding us that the Puerto Rican poor may not be a monolithic category, as it generally has been implied in the discussions of poverty researchers in the United States. There are other more current studies that should be reviewed which assist us in understanding Puerto Rican poverty in the United States in a broader context than would be suggested by research relying exclusively on hard data and surveys. In fact, due to history, culture, and patterns of migration, there is no justification for continual discussions about Puerto Rican poverty in the United States as totally separate from the issue of poverty in Puerto Rico.

Poverty as Powerlessness and Non-Participation

The role of politics is ignored in many research studies about urban poverty. While everyone acknowledges the importance of politics in driving public policy, when it comes to urban poverty and Puerto Ricans, or blacks, research discussions automatically switch to a "non-politics" mode. There seems to be a myopia that exists among some poverty researchers regarding political factors that may lead to and sustain persistent poverty. One widespread presumption among researchers is that the country has tried everything conceivable regarding the reduction of poverty, and therefore, continuing poverty is caused by undesirable individual and family characteristics. This "political disclaimer" is interesting in that in other policy arenas there is general acknowledgement regarding the significance of politics and political decision-making in driving public policy and the social consequences of such policies. Research studies and findings are frequently discussed and debated on technical grounds, separated completely from issues of power and wealth. It is suggested, implicitly if not explicitly, in some new research studies focusing on Puerto Rican poverty that the lack of political power has virtually nothing to do with the problem of poverty in the Puerto Rican community. This relationship is not even explored for its explanatory possibilities, it is merely assumed that poverty has more to do with pathology or the social welfare planning failures of liberals than with the level and amount of political power and political respect that Puerto Ricans, or blacks, do or do not command.

This weakness is related to the refusal on the part of researchers to acknowledge poor people as participants in research studies and projects. This may be due to the fact that the poverty research community is snug and conceptually incestuous, according to Reed in his article, *Pimping Poverty, Then and Now*.[24] This is reflected in researchers bias against the participation of poor people in the

conceptualization of public policy and anti-poverty efforts. As a matter of fact, research is sometimes utilized to discourage actively such participation. But this is unjustified and should be vigorously challenged. Barker and Peters write that more "public interaction" even in "scientific issues" is "justifiable and more desirable. Indeed the 'trans-science' nature of many issues requires that the public be involved and that science to some extent become more responsible to the public. This is by no means a plea to create an 'official science' of some sort. Rather, it is a statement of the important public interest issues involved in science and technology..."[25] The importance of the call for this kind of participation on the part of poor people in the formulation of anti-poverty efforts has led the Center for Law and Social Welfare Policy and Law in New York City to urge the Secretary of Health and Human Services to strengthen and expand procedures that would permit poor people to participate in agency decision-making. It also advocated that demonstration projects should not be approved unless it is possible for the solicitation of poor persons regarding policies and procedures.[26] Researchers should pick up this charge, as well.

There is a wide gulf between the policy discussions of researchers focusing on poverty in the U.S. and the concerns and insights offered by poor people regarding their own status. In some cases, researchers investigating poverty have done so without the benefit of understanding, or experiencing, how poor people live, or appreciating the contributions that poor people can make towards better policies. Political scientist M. E. Hawkesworth proposes that policy analysis built exclusively on scientism and quantitative technocracy has discouraged people from coming together and deliberating about how to emphasize their common concerns and solve what are ultimately problems impacting negatively on all of society. She adds, furthermore, that the "charge of scientism will continue to haunt the discipline as long as policy science is promoted as a form of objective political

problem-solving superior to, and therefore preferable to, democratic deliberation."[27]

Another observer critiques David Ellwood's *Poor Support*, for this very reason: ". . . he spends 200 pages discussing poor family dynamics without talking to an actual person or reading the work of someone who does. Ellwood seems to believe that one can infer the behavior of all poor people by extrapolating from census data and imagining what their lives might be like . . ."[28] Researchers might take umbrage at the suggestion that they should experience the lives, or at least allow poor people to explain their experiences for research purposes, arguing that processes to involve the poor would politicize their "objective" studies, or even give the poor undue influence or veto power over the conduct and findings of their research. But this kind of danger exists to a larger extent from other groups that researchers must develop cozy, and monetary (i.e., research grant) relationships with, according to Robert Formaini in his work, *The Myth of Scientific Public Policy*.[29] It is interesting that some researchers will take for granted the participation of other sectors in their research that have a much greater capacity than poor persons to control and direct their findings, analysis, and recommendations.

Many people working for civic and neighborhood organizations and involved with anti-poverty efforts, as well as poor people, are not participants in academic sectors researching and reporting about the problem of poverty. This means that researchers may not have the benefit of input from people and organizations on the "frontline" in combatting urban poverty. Furthermore, the latter have not been able to utilize appropriate findings of the researchers in their own community efforts to combat poverty and its effects. Policy processes must be developed to give these interests opportunities to mold the thinking of anti-poverty strategies and approaches. But these sectors must be involved in all aspects of the public policy process in the area of social welfare: setting the civic

agenda, conceptualizing and defining the nature of the problem, formulating adequate responses, and determining how such policies should be implemented and evaluated. On a related matter, Amitai Etzioni suggests that only a renewed civic involvement may result in creative and effective social policies for problems facing society. He argues, in *Public Policy in a New Key*, that all citizens, poor and non-poor, can make a significant improvement in public policies that influence the quality of life by becoming more civically involved.[30] Only through the inclusion and expansion of such involvement will the academic and policy community be able to develop new and creative models and concepts for overcoming the limitations of current research paradigms.

Endnotes

1. Frank Bonilla, Harry Pachon, and Marta Tienda, *Public Policy Research and the Hispanic Community: Recommendations from Five Task Forces.* (New York, NY: The Ford Foundation, 1984), p. 3.

2. Sar Levitan, "Measurement of Employment, Unemployment and Low Income," *Workforce* Spring 1994 issue, p. 19.

3. Luis Fraga, Herman Gallegos, Gerald P. López, Mary Louise Pratt, Renato Rosaldo, José Saldívar, Ramón Saldívar, and Guadalupe Valdés. *Still Looking for America: Beyond the Latino National Political Survey.* (Stanford, CA: The Public Outreach Project of the Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1994), p. 5.

4. Robert Bogdan and Margaret Krander, "Policy Data as a Social Process: A Qualitative Approach to Quantitative Data," *Human Organization*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 1980, p. 303.

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